

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Pittenweem-St Monans-Abercrombie Circular (Fife)

Route Summary

Although a little longer than our typical walk, this is essentially a gentle stroll. The history of the area is evident all around you and there are wonderful views of the coastline, and out to prominent features in the Firth of Forth such as the Isle of May and Bass Rock.

Duration: 3.5 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: Stagecoach East Scotland is the main bus operator in Fife whose routes serve most towns and villages as well as the express network to Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee. Check timetables. On and off street parking in Pittenweem.

Length: 10.950 km / 6.84 mi

Height Gain: 115 meter

Height Loss: 115 meter

Max Height: 39 meter

Min Height: 5 meter

Surface: Moderate. Mostly hard surfaces. One section on a grassy track may be muddy after wet weather.

Child Friendly: Yes, if used to walks of this distance.

Difficulty: Easy.

Dog Friendly: Yes, on lead on public roads and near farm animals.

Refreshments: Options in Pittenweem. We can recommend the Clock Tower Cafe.



Description

This walk offers a stimulating contrast between the historic and attractive coastline of the East Neuk of Fife, and the fertile rolling farmland that lies behind the coast. "Neuk" is the Scots word for nook or corner, and the East Neuk is generally accepted to comprise the fishing villages and immediate hinterland on the northern shores of the Firth of Forth. Pittenweem and St Monans are classic East Neuk seaside villages, with a patchwork of warmly coloured pantile roofs and crow-step gables tumbling down to pretty harbours, showing the influence of trade with the Low Countries in centuries past.

Pittenweem, with numerous winding streets and alleys, is the busiest fishing port in the East Neuk, reflected in the colourful and bustling harbour, and early morning fish-market. St Monans is a smaller community, now mostly a tourist destination,

and with fine views to North Berwick, the Bass Rock and the Isle of May. On the eastern side of St Monans we pass an old windmill that once powered a salt panning industry, and, on the western side, an impressive church with 14th C origins perched on the rocks just above the water-line. Heading inland, the route passes through the tiny hamlet of Abercrombie and then on to the ruined Old Church within the beautiful landscaped policies of Balcaskie House, before passing the mansion house itself on the way back to Pittenweem.

Balcaskie House originates from the 17th C and is notable as the home and early work of architect Sir William Bruce. Once described as "*the ideal of what a Scottish gentleman's home ought to be*", the gardens are aligned on the Bass Rock, with the terraces and perspective inspired by French Baroque gardens. This varied route provides an excellent introduction to walking on the Fife Coastal Path, with an appreciation of the countryside beyond the coastal villages.



Waypoints

(1) Start walk at Pittenweem Harbour

(56.21269; -2.72662)

Start the walk on East Shore, at the east end of Pittenweem harbour. Walk in a westerly direction, with the harbour on your left side, along Mid Shore, then along West Shore at the western end of the village, with sea on your left and a row of old houses on your right side.



(2) Take Fife Coastal Path towards St Monans

(56.21209; -2.73520)

In about 600 m, as you leave the village, follow the Fife Coastal Path along the coastline towards St Monans. Before you reach St Monans you will pass the site of salt pans and the windmill that pumped sea water for the production of salt. In St Monans, follow the streets past the harbour on your left to the West End, where you veer a little right and uphill, briefly, on the street known as Burnside. (592 m)



(3) Veer left and down for coastal path

(56.20372; -2.76982)

In 1.6 km, at the western end of St Monans, having ascended a short distance up the Burnside street, veer left and down a narrow path between houses, marked for the Fife Coastal Path. Cross the stone bridge underneath St Monans Parish Church, and follow the coastal path over the rocks, with the church on your right side. If the tide is too high you will have to skip this section of the walk and return to the stone bridge, resuming at the instructions for Waypoint 5. If the tide is OK, walk along the coastal path, past the graveyard, to the next headland where there is a fine viewpoint and bench. (3.2 km)



(4) Turn at headland with view of ruined Newark Castle

(56.20215; -2.77266)

In 300 m, where there is a bench beside the path, take in the views of the coast and the ruins of Newark Castle and doo-cot on the next headland. Now, re-trace your steps back to the stone bridge over the burn beside St Monan's Church*.

**Note: If you wish to walk to Newark Castle, the return trip will add about 1 km to the length of the walk. The return leg from the castle can be undertaken on the "High Tide" path, through farmland, back to St Monans.*



(5) Over bridge and left up High Tide path

(56.20334; -2.77055)

After returning to the stone bridge over the Inverie Burn, go left up the path signposted for the 'High Tide' route. Soon, after passing the modern bridge for access to the graveyard, go sharp right and along the Burnside street, heading back towards Waypoint 3. (3.7 km)



(6) Veer left along Braehead

(56.20377; -2.76966)

In 200 m, or so, after passing the path entrance at Waypoint 3, on your right, veer slightly left to follow the Braehead street, looking down on the St Monans harbour area on your right. (3.9 km)



(7) Left up Station Road

(56.20623; -2.76549)

In 400 m, at a t-junction go left and up Station Road. (4.3 km)



(8) Cross A917 road then left and up C12 road to Abercrombie

(56.20803; -2.76857)

In 200 m, where Station Road meets the A917 main road, cross the main road, go left past an ornamental boat, then right up the C12 minor road to the hamlet of Abercrombie. There is a hard-surfaced path all the way, initially on the left side of the road, later changing to the right side. (4.5 km)



(9) Cross B942 road and along grassy road

(56.21737; -2.77732)

In 1.4 km, after passing through the hamlet of Abercrombie, and passing the Abercrombie Farm on your right, cross the B942* road at a t-junction and continue in the same direction, proceeding along the grassy track on the other side, with fields on either side. (5.9 km)

Note: the B942 is a busy road with fast traffic. There is a blind spot in the dip in the road on your left side, and a bend hides oncoming traffic on your right side. **TAKE GREAT CARE CROSSING THE ROAD!*



(10) Through pedestrian gate by ruins of Abercrombie Church

(56.22098; -2.77298)

In 500 m, the grassy track between fields arrives at a set of gates where there is an information board about corn buntings. Go through the pedestrian gate and check out the ruins of Abercrombie Church and graveyard on your right side. When you are ready, continue onwards on the rough road ahead of you, into the trees. (6.4 km)



(11) Left along estate road

(56.22142; -2.77236)

Very soon, in about 100 m, you come to a junction with another estate road. Go left and follow the rough estate road through the woodland. (6.5 km)



(12) Right onto tarred estate road

(56.22211; -2.77622)

In 300 m, the rough estate road meets a tarred estate road. Go right here to follow this tarred road between open fields. (6.8 km)



(13) Right onto drive towards Balcaskie House

(56.22406; -2.76946)

In 400 m, the estate road you are on meets a long entrance drive heading towards Balcaskie House. Turn right here, to head towards the mansion house. Just before the walled entrance to the gardens of the Balcaskie House, follow the road left away from the House, passing some converted farm steading buildings on your right as you join and proceed along another long entrance drive, heading away from Balcaskie House now. (7.2 km)



(14) Through gates to exit estate grounds

(56.22509; -2.75916)

In 800 m, you will have arrived at entrance gates for Balcaskie House and estate. It is likely that these will be closed. However, press the button on the left-hand pillar of the gates and the gates will open for you (they close automatically after a short period). Go through the gates and carry on walking along the access road, soon turning sharp right to pass Inch Farm on your left side. (8.0 km)



(15) Right onto Charles Street (C44) road back to Pittenweem

(56.22279; -2.74093)

In 1.4 km, you will have arrived at the junction between the Balcaskie Estate (and Inch Farm) access road and the C44 minor road known as Charles Street. Go right here to proceed along the hard-surfaced path at the side of the road. This takes you back into Pittenweem, where you may wish to explore the old streets and lanes by the clock-tower church, before making your way to your start point at Pittenweem Harbour. (9.4 km)



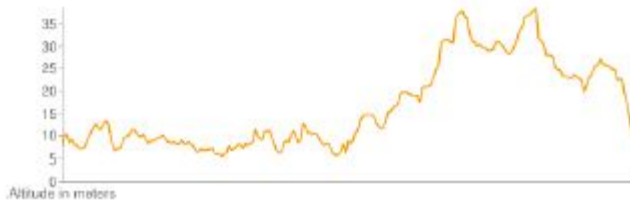
(16) Finish walk back at Pittenweem Harbour

(56.21278; -2.72658)

In 1.6 km, or so, you will have returned to your start-point at Pittenweem Harbour.



Route Map



Links:

[Photos from walk](#)

[Download Route Guide](#) (PDF with illustrated Waypoints)

[Download GPX file](#) (GPS Exchange Format)

[Access Walk on Viewranger](#)

[Access Walk on Wikiloc](#)